Socialist Worker

Support the health workers strike

A strike by over 400 healthworkers in Northern Ireland has been ongoing since November 11th. The strike is against a major attack on the wages and conditions of porters, cooks, cleaners and all ancillary staff in five hospitals across the North.

These workers are employed by a union-busting company called Compass who have been importing scabs from England and Scotland to try to break the strike. Scabs are being put up in hotels and bussed into hospitals early in the mornings under RUC protection.

Compass have tried the same tactics in hospitals in Britain and their union UNISON reckons that over 100 scabs are already imported into the North. We have not seen this level of attack on workers in Ireland since 1913. This is a vicious move designed to further divide workers in an already divided society.

But the hope lies in the fact that Protestant and Catholic workers are out together on the picket line and are determined to fight this union-busting company. Already Compass have used the law to try to injunct the pickets. What happens from here is very important to the future of trade unionism in the North and in Ireland as a whole.

If the company win then all employers will try to take a leaf from their book. If the strikers win, it will give inspiration and encouragement to thousands of workers in the North which is the low-pay economy of Europe.

Solidarity will be the key to winning the strike. Already UNISON members from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Liverpool have taken up collections for the strikers and have sent delegations to the North to support the picket lines.

If workers in the South can bring this sort of support to their colleagues in the North it would be a tremendous boost to the strike. Workplace collections and messages of support should be organised in every unionised workplace. No matter how small the amount of money you can donate, it will go a long way towards helping the strike win.

Please support the *Socialist Worker* appeal for solidarity for the strikes in the North's hospitals. Collections sheets are available and messages of support can be sent to the following:

ERNE HOSPITAL: 0801365 - 324711
TYRONE COUNTY:0801662 - 245211
LAGAN VALLEY: 0801846 - 665141
DOWNSHIRE: 0801396 - 613311

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Return to SWP PO Box 1648, Dublin 8,
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